

ELBRIDGE GERRY KEITH



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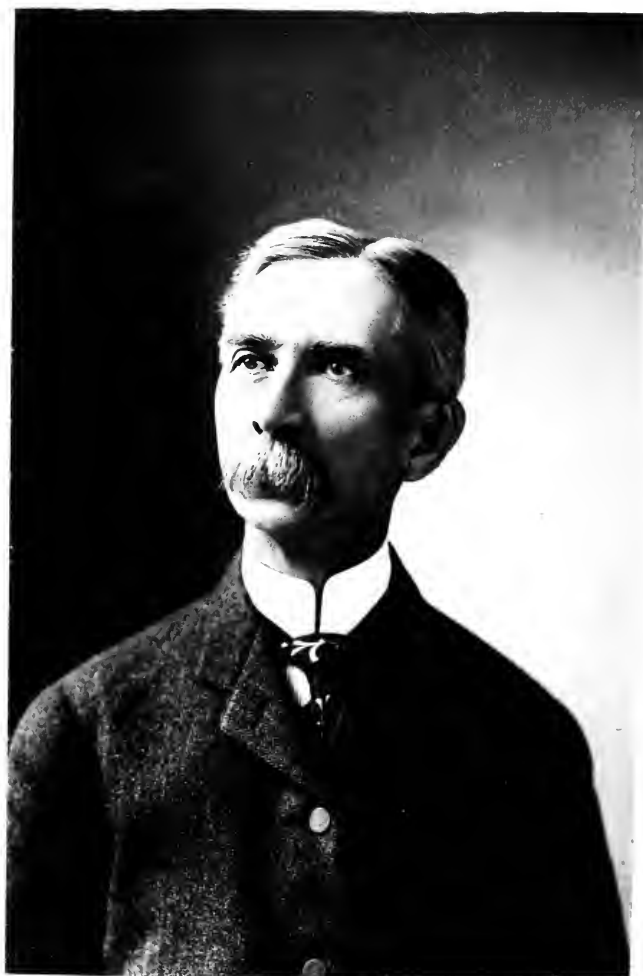
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KEITH MEMORIAL



In Memoriam
Elbridge Gerry Keith

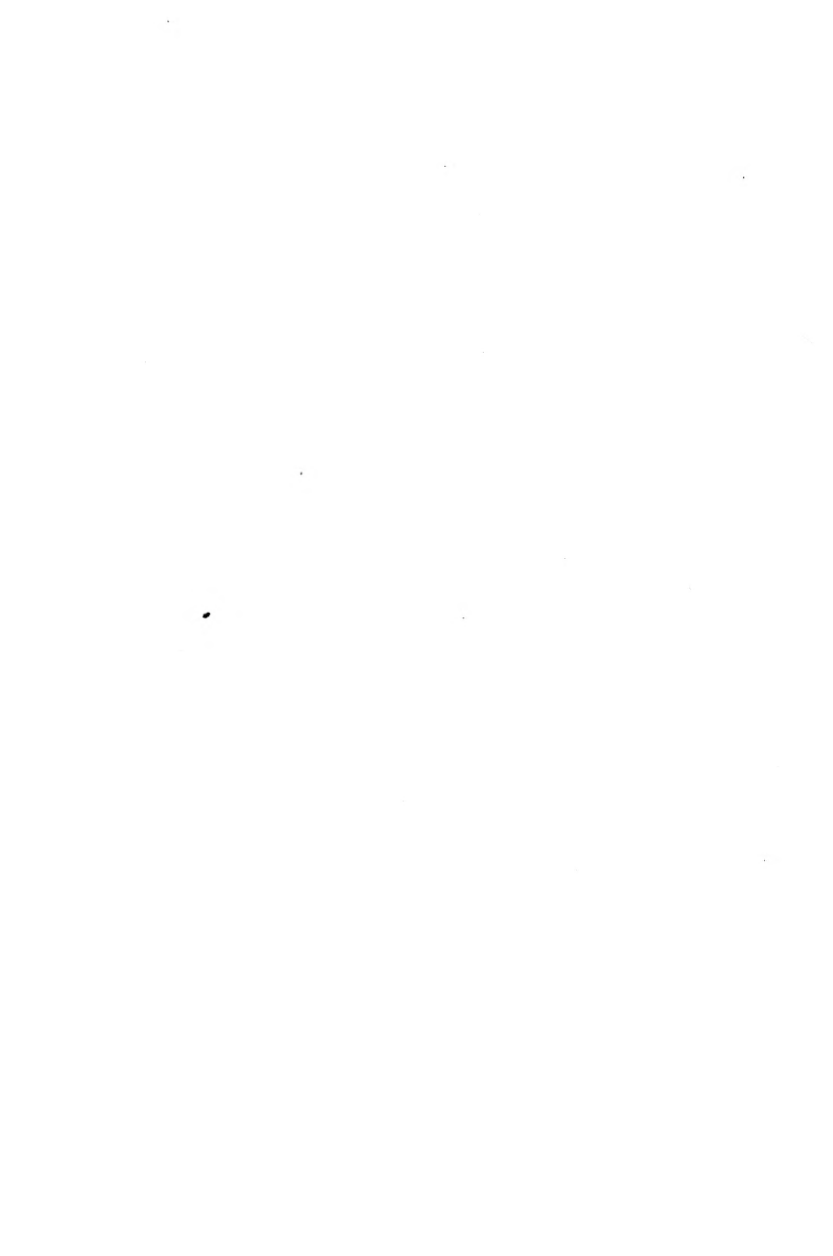
Born at Barre, Vermont,
July 16, 1840

Died at Chicago, Illinois,
May 17, 1905

SEMPER FIDELIS



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The Directors of the Chicago Title and Trust Company present this testimonial of their appreciation of the life and character of the late president of the company, Elbridge G. Keith.

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In Memoriam

ELBRIDGE GERRY KEITH was the youngest son of Martin and Betsey Keith, and was a direct descendant of James Keith, a Scotch Presbyterian clergyman, who graduated at Aberdeen College, came to America about 1650, and settled in Bridgewater, Mass.

His early years were spent on a farm. After completing a course of study in his native town and in Newbury Seminary, he became a clerk in a general store at Barre. At the age of seventeen years, Mr. Keith came to Chicago, where his two brothers, Edson and Osborne R., had preceded him. During the first eighteen months of his residence in Chicago he had several occupations, and in 1859 he became a clerk in the store of his brothers. They were associated with

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a Mr. Faxon, under the name of Keith Brothers and Faxon, dealers in hats and caps. In 1865, when Mr. Faxon retired, he was admitted as a partner, and the firm name was changed to Keith Brothers. In 1885 the business was incorporated under the name of Edson Keith & Co., and, though he was president of the corporation until his death, he did not specially devote his time to its affairs. In 1881 he was elected president of the Livingston County State Bank of Pontiac, Illinois, and divided his time between his interests in Chicago and that bank.

He was one of the organizers of the Metropolitan National Bank of Chicago in 1884, and was the president of the bank from that time until its consolidation with the First National Bank of Chicago in 1902. Immediately after the consolidation of the banks he was elected president of the Chicago Title and Trust Company, and held that position when he died.

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He was always interested in public and political affairs. When about fourteen years of age, he walked twelve miles to attend the first state convention of the Republican party in Vermont. Though not yet a voter in 1858 and 1860, he went to political meetings and took great interest in the cause of the Republican party. At the University of Illinois he recently delivered an address on the Republican National Convention of 1860. He was so calm and courteous in the expression of his political opinions that few persons realized how fixed and settled they really were. He was active in ward, city, county and state politics, and was a factor in nominating conventions. He was a delegate to the national convention in which Garfield was nominated in 1880. Though often urged to accept positions of high political importance, he repeatedly declined. He, however, took great interest in the public schools, and served on the board of educa-

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tion from 1887 to 1894. Afterward the board named one of its schools the "Keith School." At the time of his death he was one of the trustees of Beloit College and treasurer of the University of Illinois.

He was one of the incorporators of the Union League Club. At different times he was president of the Union League (1883), the Commercial (1892), and the Bankers' Club (1890), the Chicago Clearing-House (1888), the Young Men's Christian Association, and the Chicago Orphan Asylum, and treasurer of the Chicago Bible Society, the Bureau of Charities, the Home of the Friendless, and the University of Illinois.

He was a director of the World's Columbian Exposition and an active worker in that great enterprise.

During his life in Chicago he took an active part in all movements tending to the welfare of the city, the state and the nation. He was a firm believer in philanthropic

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work, and was a generous giver to many charities. For more than thirty years he was a member of Christ Reform Episcopal Church, and for many years he was its senior warden. He gave liberally both in time and money to religious work, and was well known as a worker in missions of the church. The devotion between him and his brothers was one of the marked characteristics of their lives, and the death of each of them made a profound impression on him.

In December, 1865, he was married to Miss Harriet S. Hall of La Salle, Illinois, who survives him. He left three sons, Carl, Stanley and Harold, and one daughter, Miss Bessie.

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The Chicago Daily Tribune of May 18, 1905, contained the following editorial comment:

ELBRIDGE G. KEITH

For nearly half a century Elbridge G. Keith was in business life in Chicago. During the greater part of that time he was prominently before the public as a leading merchant, as the head of great corporations, and as an active politician. In these different fields of activity he so conducted himself as to win the respect and confidence of all who came in contact with him.

As a business man Mr. Keith was shrewd and long-headed, but he was not grasping or avaricious. He was scrupulously honest, and would not take an unfair advantage of any one. He had a kindly generous nature which manifested itself in his intercourse with

men of all conditions. This combination of qualities, not to be found in every business man, gained for him a comfortable fortune and an enviable reputation.

Mr. Keith entertained the old-fashioned idea that it was the duty of a man who had a stake in the community to take an active interest in its general welfare. So he did not shut himself up in his store or bank, but endeavored to be in fact, and not by brevet, a "public-spirited citizen." The last valuable work he did for the city was as president of the New Charter Committee, which succeeded in securing the submission and ratification of the charter constitutional amendment. Mr. Keith did not think it undignified for him to go into politics and to "run his ward," but not to get offices for himself. He was for a time the "beneficent boss" of his bailiwick. When he stepped out, other bosses who had few of his good qualities, and whose rule was not so good-naturedly sub-

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mitted to, succeeded him. The successful, high-minded business man would be a leader whom the people would gladly follow were he to turn his attention to practical politics, but Chicago, which once had leaders of that kind, has none now.

Chicago has lost a broad-minded, philanthropic and energetic citizen, always ready to give time and money for the public good. The business community has lost one of its ablest and most upright members, whose advice was eagerly sought and confidently followed.

The Chicago Evening Post of May 18, 1905, gave this estimate of him:

ELBRIDGE GERRY KEITH

Elbridge G. Keith was a conspicuous example of that very useful citizen, the business man who takes an active and intelligent interest in the general welfare of the community in which he lives. He was not slothful

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in business; therefore he prospered. He was fervent in the spirit which entered into all that concerned his fellows; he could be in practical politics without being a "practical politician."

Some men there are who can be nothing but honest in their business dealings and anything but honest in politics. These men cannot be called good citizens, no matter how much public spirit they show. Mr. Keith did not belong to this class. He carried his business honesty into the ward-meeting, into everything he undertook for the betterment of the city and of his fellow-citizens.

If Mr. Keith did not think the chosen officials of the people were managing public affairs as they should be managed, he did not sit in his bank or in his library and rail at dishonesty and corruption in politics; he got into the caucus and the primary and forced the dishonest and the corrupt and the in-

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competent to retreat. He believed that a good citizen meant an active citizen, and he acted on this belief.

In contributing his full share toward building up the commercial interests of his adopted city through nearly half a century of activity, Mr. Keith did not slight other interests. He took a directing hand in the business of the board of education; he was a leader in college affairs; religious and philanthropic institutions and movements received his hearty support; the broader field of civic improvement and progress found him an ever-ready worker; and he had time in addition to play his part in the social life of the city.

This broad-minded, energetic, kind-hearted citizen leaves Chicago a legacy that cannot be measured in terms of dollars and cents. His life of active endeavor and conspicuous achievement is an encouragement to every young man to make the best of his

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opportunities; to slight neither business nor public life; to be generous and charitable toward all; to be faithful to his own place, confident in his own powers, honest in all his dealings and steadfast in his adherence to what he believes to be right.

The Union League Club of Chicago, in commending his life and deploring his death, said in part:

Mr. Keith possessed the sterling virtues, the unfaltering courage, the patient persistence, the wise caution which always and everywhere insure success. Industry, integrity and a high standard of honor were wrought into the very fiber of his being. He was simply incapable of injustice. While he had a quiet dignity which forbade undue familiarity, his life was full of gentleness, sweet courtesy and gracious deeds. His heart was a perennial fountain of kindness and his benefactions were abundant but un-

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obtrusive. He was an ardent patriot, a true and steadfast friend, and a devout Christian. But his rugged uprightness, softened by his transparent candor, simplicity and sincerity, was the charm and crowning glory of his character. He was not ambitious for place or power, but he never shrank from duty or responsibility. He never sought place or preferment, but when, because of his eminent fitness, they were accorded him, he discharged their duties with conspicuous fidelity. Self-poised and self-reliant, he illustrated most admirably the beautiful epigram of Bishop Hall: "Moderation is the silken string running through the pearl chain of all the virtues." Firm in his convictions of right, brave enough to express his honest sentiments on all occasions, he was yet so frank, so fair, so considerate of the opinions of others, that he won the highest esteem and warm regard of all who knew him. He was fond of books and their companion-

ship was the solace and joy of his leisure hours.

Standing to-day in the somber shadow of his tomb, we need not invoke the aid of the friendly maxim, *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, as an excuse for discreet speech or more discreet silence, for there was nothing in his public career or private life which charity would fain conceal. We can recall no unjust act, no unkind word, no look which could wound the most sensitive soul. His life was an open book upon whose fair pages are recorded only gracious words and worthy deeds, whereon is found no disgraceful stain, no careless blot. His character was the incarnation of the golden rule, his life its beautiful exemplification. It is of such men that Emerson says: "The world is upheld by the veracity of good men; they make the earth wholesome. They who live with them find life glad and nutritious." Having filled the full measure of a noble and useful

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life, "God's finger touched him and he slept."

He will be greatly missed in the city he has done so much to improve and beautify; in the church where he has so long and faithfully wrought and sincerely worshiped; by the friends to whom his companionship has been so precious. The members of this Club whose relations to him were so pleasant, and who entertained for him such sincere respect, will miss his genial greeting, his earnest words, his responsive sympathy, and will sorrow most of all that they shall see his face no more

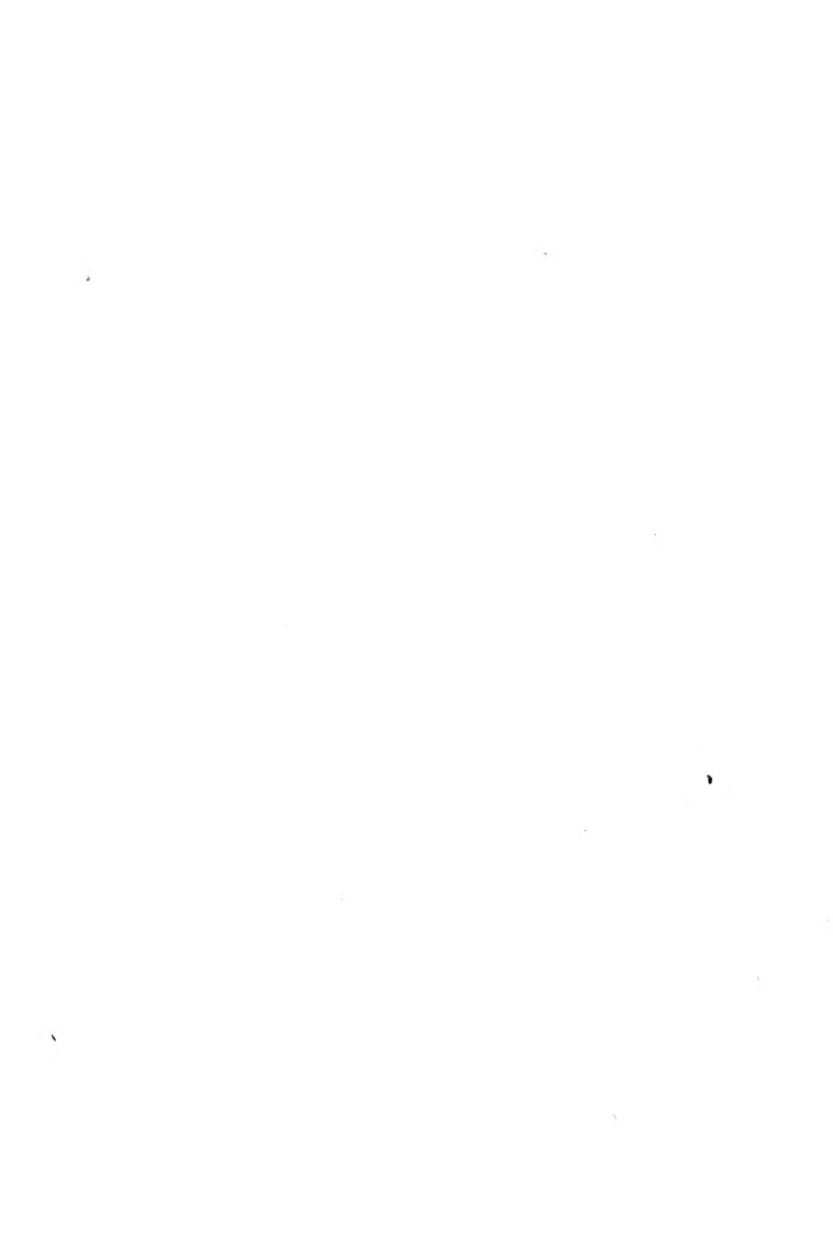
"Till the sun grows cold
And the stars are old,
And the leaves of the judgment-book unfold."

On the shining heights beyond the river, in the beautiful land,

"Whose skies are not like earthly skies,
With varying hues of shade and light,
Which hath no need of suns to rise
To dissipate the gloom of night,"

he has entered upon the immortal life.
There he awaits our tardier footsteps.

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